

Timeless by orphan_account

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Summary:

In a future society, time-travel exists, but it's only available to those with the means to pay for it on the black market. When the mob wants to eliminate someone, it sends the target into the past, where a hit man known as a looper lies in wait to finish the job. Mike is one such hired gun, and he does his job well -- until the day his bosses decide to "close the loop" and sends his future self back in time to be killed by him.

Inspired by Looper

1. Chapter 1

Author's Note:

"Time past and time future. What might have been and what has been point to one end, which is always present."

- Burnt Norton

Location: Edge Of Corn Fields, Time: Day

A pocket watch. Open. Ticking. Swinging from a chain.

Held by a young man named Mike in a clearing beside an Indiana corn field. Sky pregnant with rain.

Waiting. He checks the watch, removes his earbud headphones, stands.

Without much ceremony a bloodied man in a suit appears from thin air, kneeling before the young man. Hands and feet tied. Burlap sack over his head. Muffled screams, gagged.

With no hesitation Mike raises a squat gun and blows the man apart with a single cough of a shot.

LATER

Mike loads the corpse into the flatbed of his truck.

Cuts open the back of the body's jacket, revealing four bars of silver taped to the dead man's back. Mike takes them.

Location: Industrial Plant, Time: Day

Time travel has not yet been invented. But thirty years from now it will be. Once the technology exists, it will be relatively cheap and available to the public at large. And so. It will be instantly outlawed, used only in secret by the largest criminal organizations. And then only for a very specific purpose.

Mike drives up to an industrial plant and parks his truck, removes the wrapped corpse from the flatbed.

It's nearly impossible to dispose of a body in the future. Tagging techniques, whatnot. So when these future criminal organizations in the future need someone gone, they use specialized assassins in the present, called loopers.

Mike carries the body to an iron hatch, opens it, and dumps him in.

And so. Thirty years from now. The employers in the future nab the target, they zap him back to their looper. And they do the necessities. So the target has vanished from the future, and they dispose of a body that technically does not exist. Clean.

The body slides down a long chute. Vanishes in a little flare of angry red fire.

Location: Diner, Time: Day

Mike sits at a diner booth listening to headphones. A waitress sets down coffee.

Her bright red name tag: BEATRIX.

Beatrix: Bon jour, Mike.

Mike: Bon jour, Beatrix.

Beatrix: How's the French?

Mike: Slow. How's the coffee?

Beatrix: Burnt.

Location: Farmland Road, Time: Day

Mike's truck zooms from the flat fields towards a mid sized city on the horizon.

Location: Pawn Shop, Time: Day

Grungy, heavily fortified. Mike enters and puts his gun in a basket

labeled “LOOPERS - BLUNDERBUSSES”

Slips down a narrow passage, which ends at a steel wall with a protruding duct taped camera and microphone.

Mike: Two, Jedd.

Mike fishes the two silver bars from his jacket.

A small narrow slot slides open in the wall, and gnarled old hands take the silver bars. It slides shut again.

In the background the front door to the pawn shop dings open. The slot slides open and Jedd's hands push a wad of cash.

Mike pockets it, and backs around Dale, another Looper.

Dale: Hey Mike. Be at the Belle tonight?

Mike: Yup.

Dale hands four silver bars through the slot as Mike retrieves his gun and exits.

Dale: Four, Jedd.

Location: Mike's Apartment, Time: Afternoon

High ceilings, big clean windows overlooking a sooty city.

Mike finishes smoothing out an oriental rug and scoots a coffee table in place over it.

Puts a bebop LP on a turntable.

LATER

On the bed, shooting at the ceiling with his fingers.

Mike: Bon jour, mademoiselle. Bang!

Location: Car Garage, Time: Evening

Suit-and-tie Mike pulls a tarp off a cherried-out 1992 Mazda Miata. Lingers over it. His baby.

Location: City Streets, Time: Evening

Mike drives through the sooty city streets. A muted beep, and he fishes a matchbook sized screen from his pocket.

Mike: Yeah Will? Yeah. Ok.

Location: Street Corner, Time: Evening

A young looper named Will on the side of the road, kneeling beside a motorcycle without wheels called a slat bike. He kicks it in frustration.

A vagrabt approaches and Will pulls a gun, identical to Mike's.

Will: Walk around! Around, I'm not kidding. Walk around, ya shit.

The vagrant crosses the street. Mike pulls up.

Mike: Will.

Will: Hi Mike.

Mike: That's nice.

Will kicks the bike.

Will: Thanks. Goddamn thing. You going to the Belle?

Mike and Will drive through the city streets.

Mike: Slat Bikes are all junk. Stick with rubber on the road.

Will: Yeah but Gat Men pull up in them, they get respect.

Mike: They get respect cause they run the town. How much did that thing set you back? How much?

Will holds a quarter idly in his palm.

Will: I was gonna pull up in it. Tonight. Heads or tails, call it in the air.

The coin lifts, floats several inches in the air, quivering.

Mike: Congratulations. You're pulling up with me instead.

Mike notices the floating quarter.

Mike: And don't, if we're going in, don't do that.

Will: Chicks dig TKs.

Mike: It's tacky, don't do it.

Will catches the quarter, sullen.

When the TK mutation started appearing in the general populace it was on every magazine - "Next Step in Evolution, what's next." Everyone got tested. But turns out this was it, and now it's just a bunch of assholes thinking they're blowing your mind by floating quarters.

Location: La Belle Aurore, Time: Evening

Bouncer: No loopers in the club on Wednesdays, Mike. Gat men only.

Will backs towards the door, Mike stops him.

Mike: We'll stick backstage, just meeting up. In and out.

Bouncer: Packing your blunderbusses?

Mike: Hardly. Right Will?

Will: Hardly. I'm with Mike.

The bouncer pats them down, waves them in.

A claustrophobic maze of twisty halls and passages. Dangerous men and half naked show girls weave through.

Mike expertly navigates the turns, going someplace. Will struggles to

keep up.

Will: So are we - hey -

Mike has vanished. Will stops meekly, butted by passing men.

An ornate parlor, lacy women entertaining men. A velvet curtained doorway leads to back rooms.

Mike lingers by the entrance, watching one girl in particular, Max. Bold dark eye makeup. A big man leads her off through the curtains. Mike's eyes drop. Pained.

Dale, the Looper from the pawn shop, passes fast. Curious, Mike follows. They pass Will, who tails after them.

A starkly lit steep stairwell leads down. Five or six young loopers gather at the top. Mike and Dale join them.

Mike: What?

Dale: Zach. In there right now, with Hopper.

Dale makes a quarter float above his palm. Mike rolls his eyes.

Mike: For what?

Will: He closed his loop.

This lands heavily on Mike.

Mike: No shit?

The door at the bottom of the stairs opens, and Zach, another looper, steps out. An older man's hand pats his shoulder then retracts into the door.

The loopers watch him in awe.

There's a reason loopers are called loopers.

Location: Abandoned Lot, Time: Day (Flashback)

Zach stands waiting, checking his wristwatch, gun in hand. Obviously performing a similar ritual to Mike's.

Time travel in the future is so illegal, that when they sign up for this job they agree to a very specific proviso.

Zach raises his gun.

If employers in the future get busted up by the law, their first priority is going to be erasing any trace of their relationship with their looper.

A flash of light, and a hog tied man with a sack over his head kneels in front of Zach.

Zach fires, and the man's chest explodes.

So. If they're busted, and if they're looper is still alive 30 years from now, they'll find his older self and zap him back to his younger self, like any other job.

Zach rips open the back of the corpse's jacket, revealing several dozen gold bars taped to his back.

This is called closing your loop.

Zach freezes. Looks at the shape of the corpse's face through the sack.

And they get paid out a mythic amount of money, and they get a handshake and get released from their contract. Enjoy the next 30 years.

Zach reaches the top of the stairs, a grin on his face.

This job doesn't tend to attract the most forward thinking people.

2. Chapter 2

Location: La Belle Aurore Club, Time: Night

Lurid and very loud mixture of a dance club and cabaret. One by one the loopers emerge from side exits, sneaking in. Paupers at the feast.

Mike and several other loopers pass around an eye dropper. Pupils slacken. The drug spins him into a slurred revelry.

Mike staggers out on the dance floor. Miles high.

LATER

Mike and the loopers are kicked out by burly gat men, followed by Lucas, pointing and yelling at them. The loopers laugh their asses off.

Location: City Streets, Time: Night

Mike's Miata screams through the abandoned city streets, the other loopers in the car with him.

Location: Will's Apartment, Time: Dawn

Mike drops Will off at his building with its bright red garage.

Mike: Sell that goddamn slat bike back. That's a lot of stupid money.

Will: I got stupid money.

Will holds his hand under fuzzy dice hanging from Mike's mirror, and they spin.

Mike: Alright.

Will stumbles toward his door.

Will: You know what? TKs are special. Fuck you.

Mike: Thanks Will.

Location: Mike's Apartment, Time: Morning

An alarm wakes Mike, red-eyed.

Location: Corn Field, Time: Day

Mike's pocket watch is at 2:29, ticking away.

A hog-tied man with a sack on his head appears before Mike. He shoots the man in the chest, without hesitation.

Location: Diner, Time: Day

Mike sits at a booth, the waitress Beatrix brings his coffee.

Location: Pawn, Time: Day

Mike: Two, Jedd.

Jedd opens a slot and takes two gold bars from Mike, then hands him out a small stack of cash.

Marks Mike's name in a notebook, the date and the number '2'. All the other transactions have the number '4'.

Location: Mike's Apartment, Time: Night

A harsh pounding.

Mike, flopped on the bed, stirs. Then wakes with a jump, shaky on his feet.

Goes to the door. A screen shows nobody in the hall outside.

Pound pound pound. The window. Mike slides it open. Will tumbles in off the fire escape.

Mike: Jesus, Will.

Will: They're gonna be here any minute, are they here?

Mike: No, they're not here. Who?

Will: Christ. Mike. Christ.

Mike's eyes focus a bit, he tunes in to the situation. Turns the apartment lights off.

Will: Right. Smart.

Mike: Will, sit down here.

Crash! Will knocks something over in the dark. Mike opens the fridge, pale light. Will sits at the kitchen table.

Will: Late to my own funeral. Mom always said...

Mike: Tell me now.

Will: Christ, Mike. Late to my own goddamn funeral. Can you help me?

Mike: Will, what did you do?

Will: You can protect me a little, right? Just so they don't... jeez. Oh jeez. This is like a nightmare. This is a nightmare.

Mike knew then what he did so he didn't know why he asked.

Mike: What did you do?

Will lifts his eyes to Mike.

Will: He was singing.

Location: Corn Field, Time: Day, (Flashback)

Flash: a hog-tied man with a sack over his head appears. Singing.

Will, with his gun raised, hesitates.

Will: Through the gag and mask, but I could hear the tune. Deep memories, my mom in a dark room, singing. Back warm and safe, when I coulda still been good. And once I knew it was him... Mike I couldn't. I couldn't. I had to see.

Will pulls the sack off the man's head.

Will: Mike I can't even tell you. Looking in his eyes. I had to let him talk, then. I don't even remember the words, but I remember believing every one of them, or not even believing, but submitting. I've never felt that small before. I've never felt that happy. He told me. I remember, there's a new holy terror boss-man in the future, and he's closing all the loops. The Rainmaker, they call him. He told me. Then he wanted a cigarette and I untied him, and he gives me this look. And he just starts running. And I had my blunderbuss so I know he's got about fifteen strides till he's out of my range. And they come and go, and I just watch him till he's gone.

Will breaks down crying.

This is called letting your loop run. It's not a good thing.

Will: What do I do? You're the only friend I got Mike you gotta help me

Mike: You can't be here, I'll give you a little money but you gotta -

Will: Mike? A little - where am I gonna -

Mike: You hop a freight train, you beat it the hell out -

Pound pound pound. On the door this time. Will makes a sound like he's going to die, Mike closes the fridge.

Mike: Shut up. Don't move.

Goes to the door. Two gat men and Lucas stand outside.

Lucas: Open up Mike! (to one of the gat men) Watch the window.

Mike spins from the door. Considers briefly.

Mike: I can't do anything for you Will.

Will crumples to his knees, grasping Mike's hand.

Will: No! You gotta hide me! Mike, hide me, please Christ please Mike please hide me tell em something to buy time and I'll leave please-

Pound pound pound.

Mike: Hold on!

Watching Will, Mike's face breaks in a moment of decision. He flips the lights on, and briskly pulls back his oriental rug.

A floor safe with a touch pad. He enters a code, opens it. The safe is wide and deeper than you'd expect, lined with silver bars. Big enough for a man. Will scrambles in.

Mike takes one last look at Will's frightened, grateful face, framed by the silver bars, then closes the safe and smooths the oriental rug.

Mike opens the door.

Lucas storms in, his gun drawn, sweeping through the apartment with over-eager purpose.

One gat man stays outside, the other casually sits at Mike's kitchen table. Lucas gets in Mike's face.

Lucas: That took awhile.

Mike: You think it's easy looking this good?

Lucas: Dustin's going to watch your apartment while we go have a talk with Hopper.

Mike grabs a jacket.

Mike: There's coffee in the tin.

Dustin: Thank you.

3. Chapter 3

Location: La Belle Aurore, Time: Dawn

Lucas leads Mike down the stairs and into the door at their base.

Dingy with a few benches. In one wall three steep stairs lead to a high door. Lucas knocks. Muffled voice from within:

Hopper: Two minutes.

LATER

Mike and Lucas on benches, facing each other. Lucas stares daggers and spins his gun. Mike tries his best not to engage.

Lucas: You know why they call that pea shooter a blunderbuss? Cuz it's impossible to hit anything farther than 15 feet, and impossible to miss anything closer. A gun for fuck up turkeys. Not like a gat. A gat has range. Accuracy.

His gun spinning gets fancier. His gun meaner looking than Mike's blunderbuss, long and slim and chrome.

Mike: Alright, cut it out Lucas. You're gonna blow your foot off again.

Lucas almost snaps back, but then grins.

Lucas: You're right, it'd be real easy for it to accidentally go off.

He clicks the safety off. Mike shifts uncomfortably.

Mike: C'mon.

Lucas: Don't disrespect a gat man, Looper.

Mike stifles a chuckle.

In a flash, Lucas stands and pistol-whips him across the face. Mike falls back. Lucas raises his gun at Mike.

Frozen in that tableau a moment, Lucas savors his victory. Lowers his

gun.

Hopper: What the hell is going on out there-

The high door swings open fast, smacking Lucas hard on the side of the head. His gun goes off, firing into the wall.

Out of nowhere three gat men burst into the room, guns drawn. Hopper, a man in his 50s, appears in the high doorway.

Lucas: S'alright, s'alright.

Humiliated, Lucas tries to stand, but falls over again. After a moment everyone realizes what's happened, and the tension breaks.

Hopper: Alright. Mike.

Mike climbs into the doorway. Lucas stands shakily.

Hopper: You didn't shoot your other foot off, didja kid?

The door closes, and the gat men laugh at Luxas.

Hopper: My great grandfather always told my grandfather, men are like spiders. It's the little ones you gotta be careful of.

Mike: Dunno I agree with that.

Hopper: Oh yeah? Well. What the fuck did my great grandfather know.

This man is from the future. He was sent back here by the mob, a one way ticket, to run the loopers. That's low effort even for Hopper, so to pass the time he recruited some real muscle, the gat men. Now he runs the city. Any other city, that'd be impressive.

Hopper settles in his chair. Regards Mike.

Hopper: I do like you, Mike. But we're sure enough Will paid you a visit and we're gonna hafta do something about that.

Mike: Will?

Hopper: You're expecting we're gonna break your fingers with a hammer or something awful, and I'm going to diffuse that tension right now, that isn't going to happen. What's going to happen is, I'm going to talk for a little, not even that long, then you're gonna give up your friend.

Mike: My friend Will? I'm confused.

Hopper: Well then I'll talk a little. You know you were the youngest looper I ever hired? You looked goddamn ridiculous they said, the blunderbuss up to here on you. But I remember they brought you in, I forget what it was for,

Mike: Watch shop.

Hopper: That's right yeah, you had rolled one of our fronts, a watch shop. And they had you, your arms pinned, this kid. Like an animal. But you looked at me, your hair stuck to half your face so just this one eye looking at me. And I thought what's this kid lived through, what he had taken away from him. What's he lost. And I could see, like seeing it happen clear as seeing it, the bad path in front of you, the bad version of your life. Like a vision I saw it happen, you turning bad. So I cleaned you up and put a gun in your hand. I gave you something that was yours.

Mike: You know I'm grateful, Hopper.

Hopper: I gave you something that was yours. And I remember that kid, and I think when you ask yourself you ask who would I sacrifice for what's mine, I think Will is deep and cozy inside that circle.

Pause. Both their eyes go to a hammer sitting on the desk.

Hopper: That hammer's there for something else later, that's not for you, it's a bad coincidence.

Mike: Okay.

Hopper: Shows how much I know you, I'm not even gonna break you, just set you back a ways. We know you've been stashing half your bars. Which is smart. You give up Will, or you give us half your stash. For Will.

Mike holds Abe's gaze for a moment, then his eyes drop and it's over.

Silence.

Mike: Will you kill him?

Hopper: No. Would be too cataclysmic a change to the future. What we'll do is dangerous in that regard, but not as dangerous as killing him, and not by twice as having him run free. Mike I let him run more than a few days, the boys in the future get nervous, then bing! my replacement shows up. With a gun. So we'll do what we have to do.

Mike: Floor safe, beneath the rug. 2211.

One of the gat men quietly exits.

Hopper: It's the little ones that get you.

Notes for the Chapter:

The safe code is an easter egg, if you work it out, tell me in the comments